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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003154

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/RSP/TC AND OES/IHA

STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W

HHS FOR ERICA ELVANDER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [OSCI](#) [OTRA](#) [SENV](#) [TW](#) [ESTH](#)

SUBJECT: DEADLY ENTEROVIRUS STRAIN STRIKES U.S. CITIZEN IN TAIWAN

1. Summary. AIT/T in cooperation with AIT/K has been following the incidence of the infectious disease enterovirus, which has thus far claimed 4 lives in Taiwan this year. While this year, the disease appears less prevalent than in some recent years past, it has caught AIT's attention as one of its four victims was a U.S. citizen. Discussions with Taiwan's Center for Disease Control (TCDC) suggest this year's outbreak appears contained and not a cause for undue alarm. End Summary.

#### Background

2. Enterovirus, more commonly known as hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), is a common illness of infants and children. It is rarely fatal in most places in the world. However, Taiwan has had outbreaks of a particularly virulent strain called eEnterovirus 71 (E71), which has led to fatalities every year since 1998.

3. Taiwan has followed the incidence of enterovirus very closely ever since 1998 when it experienced a major outbreak of the disease. In 1998, the disease resulted in 78 deaths. In 1999, the disease claimed 9 lives, in 2000, it claimed 41 lives, in 2001, it claimed 58 lives, in 2002 it claimed 30 lives and in 2003 it claimed 8 lives.

4. Taiwan's enterovirus 71 cases have tended to be concentrated in the central and southern parts of Taiwan and among babies under the age of one. According to TCDC's monitoring record, the outbreak usually starts in mid-March and reaches the peak between late May and early June. It usually subsides during summer when schools are out and then increases again in September.

5. So far in 2004, a total of 89 enterovirus cases have been reported to TCDC. Twenty eight of the cases have been confirmed as enterovirus. Four of the cases have resulted in death. Of the 28 confirmed cases, six were in Taichung County (one death), four in Taichung City, three in Changhua County, one in Miaoli County and one in Nantou County. There have been eight cases in southern Taiwan: three in Tainan County (one death), two in Pingtung County (one death), and one each in Kaohsiung county, Kaohsiung city and Tainan City. There have also been five cases in northern Taiwan, two in Taipei County and three in Taoyuan County (one death). Thus far, there have been no reported cases from Taipei. Most of the deaths have been confirmed as Enterovirus 71.

#### Outlook Cautiously Optimistic

6. On September 29, 2004, AIT/K was informed that a nine-month old U.S. citizen, residing in Southern Taiwan's Pingtung County, had died of enterovirus. Subsequently, AIT/T and AIT/K both contacted their respective TCDC contacts to obtain an update on the enterovirus threat. Although little consolation to the family of the Amcit victim or the other infant victims this year, TCDC officials stress that the four deaths among a total of 28 confirmed cases through September 27 this year compares favorably with the 60 confirmed cases and six deaths Taiwan had experienced during the same period in 2003. While they continue to monitor closely the incidence of enterovirus, TCDC officials told us that this year's outbreak appears relatively controlled and do not believe it is cause for undue alarm. AIT/T and AIT/K will continue to monitor the situation and keep Washington apprised if this year's outbreak of enterovirus in Taiwan appears to worsen significantly.

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